

# ***Voting Information News***

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***A roundup of voting news from the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) for voters, potential voters and those who assist voters.***

## **Transmit Election Materials Electronically**

### **Background**

Many states allow the transmission of election materials electronically either by facsimile (fax) or electronic mail (email). The state may allow the citizen to:

1. Send the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) for registration and/or absentee ballot request by fax or email.
2. Receive the blank absentee ballot by fax or email.
3. Return the voted absentee ballot by fax or email.
4. Perform any combination of 1, 2 and 3 above.

To check on your state, see the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) under Miscellaneous Information (on the left), Voting Assistance Tools, **Chart of State and Territory Policies Concerning Electronic Transmission of Election Materials**. Then refer to the *Voting Assistance Guide (VAG)*, Chapter 3, Sections II. or III. E. for more specific information on your state's electronic transmission of official election materials before faxing or emailing.

### **Sending the FPCA by Fax**

Where allowed by state law, the FPCA may be faxed to the local election official. The citizen should:

1. Complete and sign the FPCA legibly using **dark ink** according to each state's requirements as indicated in Chapter 3 (in the presence of a witness or notary if required by the state). A fillable Portable Document Format (PDF) of the FPCA is available online (OFPCA) at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).
2. Complete the Electronic Transmission Sheet included in the *VAG*, Appendix B (online at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)) (or alternative cover sheet containing similar information). Include the number of pages being transmitted for each FPCA.
3. **Fax both sides of the FPCA.** Use a separate transmittal cover sheet for each FPCA. Do not bundle FPCAs for faxing under one cover sheet unless they are addressed to the same voting jurisdiction. If they have the same final destination, more than one FPCA with one cover sheet may be faxed in a single transmission. Ensure all pages are transmitted successfully and in proper order.
4. After faxing, **mail the completed FPCA** to the local election official's address as listed in the state section in the *VAG*, Chapter 3, even if it may not arrive by the state's registration/ballot request deadline.

### **Receiving the Blank Absentee Ballot by Fax**

Where allowed by state law, the blank absentee ballot will be faxed from the local election official to the fax number provided by the citizen on the FPCA or other absentee ballot request. The citizen should follow all instructions provided by the local election official in marking, executing and returning the ballot.

### **Returning the Voted Absentee Ballot by Fax**

If the citizen determines that there is not sufficient time to return the ballot by mail and the state allows receipt of a voted ballot by fax, the voted ballot may be transmitted by fax. The citizen should follow the instructions provided by the local election official in marking and executing the ballot.

The citizen should vote in private and fax the voted ballot (as allowed by the state) in private. **The voter must understand that by faxing the voted ballot, he/she is waiving the right to secrecy of the ballot.** The voter must

sign a statement on the transmittal cover sheet (see 2. above) indicating, “I understand that by faxing my voted ballot I am voluntarily waiving my right to a secret ballot.” This must be followed by the signature of voter and the date.

The voter is advised to obtain and retain a facsimile receipt of the date and time the voted ballot was faxed successfully. Ensure all information is entered, especially the complete destination address for the ballot (as found under the respective state headings in the VAG, Chapter 3, Section IV, Where to Send It), and the signed statement referenced above.

After faxing, mail the voted ballot to the local election official’s address provided or as listed in the state section in the VAG, Chapter 3, even if it may not arrive by the state’s ballot return deadline. **See page 3 for further mailing information.** When transmitting election materials by fax the citizen may use the following toll-free numbers:

**DSN 223-5527**

**(703) 693-5527**

**1-800-368-8683**

(from U.S., Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands only)

International toll-free fax numbers

(See inside back cover of the VAG or [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov))

By using the above numbers to electronically transmit any election materials, an audit trail is maintained.

### **Sending the FPCA by Email**

Some states and localities allow submission of the FPCA by email. Voters must be sure their jurisdiction accepts emailed FPCAs before sending. A fillable Portable Document Format (PDF) of the FPCA is available online (OFPCA) at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). In addition to the following instructions, the state or county election website often provides emailing instructions. The citizen may find these websites under “State Election Sites” at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). The citizen should:

1. Complete the OFPCA from a personal computer or complete the cardstock FPCA according to the state’s requirements in the VAG, Chapter 3, using **dark ink**. The citizen should then print out the completed OFPCA and sign and date it (in the presence of a witness or notary if required by the state).
2. **Scan both sides of the FPCA** to a PDF file. Email the file as an attachment along with a scanned completed copy of the transmittal cover sheet (see 2. on page 1), or alternative cover sheet containing similar information.
3. Use a separate transmittal cover sheet and include the number of pages being transmitted for each FPCA. More than one FPCA with one cover sheet may be attached to the email in a single transmission if they are going to the same local election office. **Email the FPCA directly to the local election official.** The local election official’s email address may be obtained by linking to the State Election Site from the FVAP website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

If the citizen prefers to email the application through FVAP or is unable to obtain the local election official’s email address, it will be forwarded to the local election official as a fax. The citizen should send the transmittal cover sheet (also available online under “Electronic Transmission” at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)) as a scanned attachment along with the FPCA to: [ets@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:ets@fvap.ncr.gov). After emailing, mail the completed FPCA to the local election official’s address as listed in the state section of the VAG, Chapter 3, even if it may not arrive by the state’s registration/ballot request deadline.

### **Receiving the Blank Absentee Ballot by Email**

Where allowed by state law, the blank absentee ballot will be emailed from the local election official to the individual’s email address as indicated on the absentee ballot request (FPCA). The citizen should follow all instructions provided by the local election official in marking, executing and returning the ballot.

### **Returning the Voted Absentee Ballot by Email**

If the citizen determines there is not sufficient time to return the ballot by mail and the state allows receipt of a voted ballot by email, the voted ballot may be transmitted via email. The State or local election official cannot accept an emailed voted ballot unless allowed by state law. The citizen should follow the instructions provided by the local election official in marking and executing the ballot.

FVAP recommends that the voter email the voted ballot directly to the local election official. If unable to access the local election official’s email address, the voter should send the transmittal cover sheet (available online at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)) as a scanned attachment along with the voted ballot to: [ets@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:ets@fvap.ncr.gov). The voting materials will then be forwarded as a fax to the local election official.

The voter must understand that by emailing the voted ballot, he/she is waiving the right to secrecy of the ballot. The voter must sign a statement on the transmittal cover sheet indicating, "I understand that by emailing my voted ballot I am voluntarily waiving my right to a secret ballot." This must be followed by the signature of voter and the date.

The voter should retain a copy of the transmitted email as a receipt. Use a copy of the transmittal cover sheet found at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov) or other cover sheet containing similar information. Ensure all information is entered, especially the complete destination address for the ballot (as found under "Where to Sent It" of the respective state headings in the VAG Chapter 3), and the signed statement referenced above.

After emailing the ballot, mail the completed ballot to the local election official's address as listed in the state section in the VAG, Chapter 3, even if it may not arrive by the state's ballot return deadline.

### **Received by Fax or Email — Returned by Mail**

Official election materials that are faxed or emailed back to the local election official should also be mailed. After faxing or emailing the FPCA, mail the completed FPCA to the local election official's address as listed in the state section in the VAG, Chapter 3, even if it may not arrive by the state's registration deadline.

To return by mail a voted ballot that has been sent by fax or email, use the Security Envelope and ballot transmittal envelope from the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) Standard Form 186. See Figure 1. Detach the envelopes from the rest of the form. (Also see FWAB Illustration and Mailing Instructions in the VAG, Chapter 2 online at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)). The voter should vote in private, place only the ballot in the security envelope and seal it without any assistance whenever possible. The voter should not write on the security envelope.

If SF-186 forms are not readily available, use two plain envelopes. Mark one as the security envelope and the other as the transmittal envelope for mailing. The voter may use the prepaid (in U.S. Mails including APO and FPO addresses) envelope template as the transmittal envelope (found online at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)). See Figure 2. Follow the instructions provided with the ballot. See also Mailing Instructions for the FPCA and the FWAB in the VAG, Chapter 2.

## **JUNE VOTING WORKSHOPS**

The April 2006 *Voting Information News* described the purpose and the importance of attending a voting assistance workshop. There are a number of workshops taking place in June both in the U.S. and overseas. Many local election officials and overseas citizens attend workshops in their area if informed of these events. Voting Assistance Officers are asked to advertise these workshops throughout their areas to obtain the widest coverage and participation possible. Contact FVAP or your Service Voting Action Officer (see page 3) if you are interested in attending these workshops.

As indicated in the lead article on pages 2-3 of this newsletter, some states now allow the electronic transmission by email of blank ballots from the local election official to the voter. In some cases, states allow the return of the voted ballot from the voter to the local election official by email. The following is a list of states that currently allow blank ballot delivery by e-mail (with return of voted ballot noted in parenthesis):

## **STATES THAT ALLOW EMAILING OF BALLOTS**

**North Dakota** (also accepts voted ballot via email)

**South Carolina** (also accepts voted ballot via email)

**Montana** (some counties accept voted ballots via email)

**Mississippi** (sends and receives for active duty overseas only)

**Florida**

**Virginia**

**Wisconsin**

**Washington** (some counties allow blank ballot delivery by e-mail)

**Illinois** (Chicago/Cook County only allows blank ballot delivery by e-mail)

**Missouri** allowed emailing out of ballots for the 2004 general election.

Refer to the VAG, Chapter 3 for further information on electronic transmission of election materials.

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Department of Defense  
1155 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1155  
PHONE: (703) 588-1584; DSN: 425-1584  
FAX: (703) 696-1352; DSN: 426-1352  
VOTING INFORMATION CENTER (VIC): (703) 588-1343; DSN 425-1343  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-438-VOTE (8683)  
*Visit our website for international toll-free phone and fax numbers.*

EMAIL: [vote@fvap.ncr.gov](mailto:vote@fvap.ncr.gov)

**Comments or suggestions are welcome.**

# Vote!

Website: [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov)